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ABSTRACT

This paper describes guiding principles of educational reform founded upon character education. The signatories of the declaration recognize the following precepts for character education: (1) Education in its fullest sense is inescapably a moral enterprise; (2) We strongly affirm parents as the primary moral educators of their children and believe schools should build a partnership with the home; (3) Character education is about developing virtues--good habits and dispositions which lead students to responsible and mature adulthood; (4) The teacher and the school principal are central to this enterprise and must be educated, selected, and encouraged with this mission in mind; (5) Character is not a single course, a quick-fix program, or a slogan posted on the wall but an integral part of school life; (6) The human community has a reservoir of moral wisdom, much of which exists in our great stories, works of art, literature, history and biography; and (7) Finally, young people need to realize that forging their own characters is an essential and demanding life task. The signatories represent education, government, industry, and various educational and youth foundations. (EH)

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Boston University
Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character

CHARACTER EDUCATION MANIFESTO

February 1996

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Boston University Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character

CHARACTER EDUCATION MANIFESTO

"Is there no virtue among us? If there be not, we are in a wretched situation. No theoretical checks, no form of government, can render us secure. To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people is a chimerical idea."

—James Madison

"To educate a man in mind and not morals is to educate a menace to society."

—Theodore Roosevelt

In his January 23rd State of the Union address, President Clinton echoed the concerns of Madison and Roosevelt with an urgent call: "I challenge all our schools to teach character education, to teach good values and good citizenship."

American schools have had from their inception a moral mandate. Moral authority, once vested firmly in both our schools and teachers, has receded dramatically over the past few decades. While many teachers are valiantly working to promote good character in their classrooms, many are receiving mixed and confusing messages. Attempts made to restore values and ethics to the school curriculum through values clarification, situational ethics, and discussion of moral dilemmas have proven both weak and ephemeral, failing to strengthen the character and behavior of our young people. Still our schools too often champion rights at the expense of responsibility, and self-esteem at the expense of self-discipline.

Distressed by the increasing rates of violence, adolescent suicide, teen pregnancy, and a host of other pathological and social ills assaulting American youth, we propose that schools and teachers reassert their responsibility as educators of character. Schools cannot however, assume this responsibility alone; families, neighborhoods, and faith communities must share in this task together. We maintain that authentic educational reform in this nation begins with our response to the call for character. True character education is the hinge upon which academic excellence, personal achievement, and true citizenship depend. It calls forth the very best from our students, faculty, staff, and parents.

We, the undersigned, believe the following guiding principles ought to be at the heart of this educational reform:

1. Education in its fullest sense is inescapably a moral enterprise — a continuous and conscious effort to guide students to know and pursue what is good and what is worthwhile.

2. We strongly affirm parents as the primary moral educators of their children and believe schools should build a partnership with the home. Consequently, all schools have the obligation to foster in their students *personal and civic virtues* such as integrity, courage, responsibility, diligence, service, and respect for the dignity of all persons.

3. Character education is about developing *virtues* — good habits and dispositions which lead students to responsible and mature adulthood. Virtue ought to be our foremost concern in educating for character. Character education is *not* about acquiring the right *views* — currently accepted attitudes about ecology, prayer in school, gender, school uniforms, politics, or ideologically charged issues.

4. The teacher and the school principal are central to this enterprise and must be educated, selected, and encouraged with this mission in mind. In truth, all of the adults in the school must embody and reflect the moral authority which has been invested in them by the parents and the community.

5. Character education is not a single course, a quick-fix program, or a slogan posted on the wall; it is an integral part of school life. The school must become a community of virtue in which responsibility, hard work, honesty, and kindness are modeled, taught, expected, celebrated, and continually practiced. From the classroom to the playground, from the cafeteria to the faculty room, the formation of good character must be the central concern.

6. The human community has a reservoir of moral wisdom, much of which exists in our great stories, works of art, literature, history, and biography. Teachers and students must together draw from this reservoir within and beyond the academic curriculum.

7. Finally, young people need to realize that forging their own characters is an essential and demanding life task. And the sum of their school experiences — in successes and failures, both academic and athletic, both intellectual and social — provides much of the raw material for this personal undertaking.

Character education is not merely an educational trend or the school's latest fad; it is a fundamental dimension of good teaching, an abiding respect for the intellect and spirit of the individual. We need to re-engage the hearts, minds, and hands of our children in forming their own characters, helping them "to know the good, love the good, and do the good." That done, we will truly be a nation of character, securing "liberty and justice for all."

CHARACTER EDUCATION MANIFESTO SIGNATORIES

Kevin Ryan	Director, Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, Boston University
Roy Romer	Governor, Colorado
Terry E. Branstad	Governor, Iowa
William F. Weld	Governor, Massachusetts
John Engler	Governor, Michigan
Stephen Merrill	Governor, New Hampshire
Gary E. Johnson	Governor, New Mexico
William J. Janklow	Governor, South Dakota
Gary Beckner	Executive Director, Association of American Educators (AAE)
Jacques Benninga	Professor of Education, California State University, Fresno
Rudolfo Bernardo	Principal, Allen Classical/Traditional Academy, Dayton, OH
Diane Berreth	Deputy Executive Director, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
Karen Bohlin	Assistant Director, Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, Boston University
Gene R. Carter	Executive Director, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
Robert Coles	Professor of Psychology, Harvard University
Frederick P. Close	Director of Education, Ethics Resource Center, Washington, DC
Michael Daigneault	President, Ethics Resource Center, Washington, DC
William Damon	Professor of Education, Brown University, Providence, RI
Chester E. Finn, Jr.	John M. Olin Fellow, Hudson Institute (Former Assistant United States Secretary of Education)

Thomas Fleming	National Teacher of the Year, 1992, MI
Joseph W. Gauld	President, The Hyde Foundation, Bath, ME
John Graham	Executive Director, The Giraffe Project, Langley, Whidbey Island, WA
Charles W. Haynes	Scholar in Residence, The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University
Lewis Hodge	Professor of Education, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Henry Huffman	Director, Character Education Institute, California University of Pennsylvania
Carol Ingall	Assistant Professor, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, NY
William Kilpatrick	Professor of Education, Boston College
James Leming	Professor of Education, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale
Thomas Lickona	Director, Center for the 4th and 5th R's, State University of New York College at Cortland
Rick R. Little	President and Chief Executive Officer, International Youth Foundation, Battle Creek, MI
Sanford N. McDonnell	Chairman Emeritus, McDonnell Douglas Corporation, St. Louis, MO
Linda McKay	Coordinator, Personal Responsibility Education Process (PREP), Cooperating School Districts, St. Louis, MO
Young Jay Mulkey	President, Character Education Institute, San Antonio, TX
Warren A. Nord	Director, Program in the Humanities and Human Values, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Jim Palos	Director, Midtown Educational Foundation, Chicago, IL
Sylvia Peters	Founder, Whole Village, Whole Nation, Baltimore, MD

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David B. Resnick	Director, Center for the Advancement of Ethics, University of Wyoming
Michael J. Sentance	Massachusetts Secretary of Education
Thomas A. Shannon	Executive Director, National School Boards Association (NSBA)
Arthur J. Schwartz	Assistant Managing Director, Character Education Programs, John Templeton Foundation
Judith O. Thayer	President, Center for the Study of Ethics and Culture, NH
Hal Urban	Teacher and Author, Woodside High School, CA
Philip Vincent	Director, Character Matters, Chapel Hill, NC
Paul C. Vitz	Professor of Psychology, New York University
Mary Williams	Assistant Professor of Education, University of San Diego
Edward Wynne	Professor of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago

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SEVEN STATE GOVERNORS ENDORSE "CHARACTER EDUCATION MANIFESTO" CREATED AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Document Outlines Seven Principles of Character Education

(Boston, Mass.) — Governors from the states of Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Mexico and South Dakota, have joined a growing list of leading educators to endorse the "Character Education Manifesto," created by the Center for Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University. The manifesto is the first document of its kind in the nation to define character education and present to teachers and parents seven guiding principles for reform.

Kevin Ryan, professor of education at Boston University and director of the University's Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, created the manifesto with colleagues after hearing President Clinton's 1996 State of the Union address. "I was concerned over several skimpy or mislabeled programs being marketed as character education, and when the President challenged 'all our schools to teach character education' — 'good values and good citizenship' — it occurred to me it was high time to frame the terms of the debate around the definition of *authentic* character education," Ryan says.

In the manifesto, Ryan explains, "American schools have had from their inception a moral mandate. Moral authority, once vested firmly in both our schools and teachers, has receded dramatically over the past few decades." Authors of the manifesto propose that schools and teachers reassert their responsibility as educators of character.

The manifesto continues: "Education in its fullest sense is inescapably a moral enterprise — a continuous and conscious effort to guide students to know and pursue what is good and worthwhile. Character education is about developing virtues — good habits and dispositions which lead students to responsible and mature adulthood."

The manifesto's fifth principle: "Character education is not a single course, a quick-fix program, or a slogan posted on a wall; it is an integral part of school life. The school must become a community of virtue in which responsibility, hard work, honesty, and kindness are modeled, taught, expected, celebrated, and continually practiced."

Massachusetts Governor William F. Weld notes, "A sound philosophical framework is essential to guide parents and educators in their efforts to combat the negative influences of contemporary society. The Character Education Manifesto articulates a compelling vision of schooling, embodying timeless principles consistent with the historic mission of public education."

New Mexico Governor Gary E. Johnson says, "I believe (the manifesto) presents a very balanced set of principles to guide our nation's renewed interest in character education."

In addition to Governors Weld and Johnson, the 48 manifesto signatories to date include: Governor Roy Romer (Colorado); Governor Terry E. Branstad (Iowa); Governor Stephen Merrill (New Hampshire); Governor William J. Janklow (South Dakota); Sanford N. McDonnell, *chairman emeritus*, McDonnell Douglas Corporation; Gene Carter, executive director, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ACSD); Chester Finn, John M. Olin Fellow, Hudson Institute and former assistant secretary of education; Diane Ravitch, professor of education, New York University; Thomas A. Shannon, executive director, National School Boards Association; and Arthur J. Schwartz, assistant managing director, Character Education Programs, John Templeton Foundation.

Ryan and his staff are distributing the manifesto to educators, legislators and research organizations throughout the nation, seeking additional support. A recent article in a trade journal about the manifesto generated inquiries from school superintendents, teachers and parents from across the United States. In addition, the manifesto will be analyzed and discussed during a week-long "Teachers Academy" in Boston, Mass., sponsored by the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, July 8-12, 1996.

Boston University's Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, the first such center in the United States to focus on a teacher's role as character educator, was established in 1989. Its founders believe:

- that character education is an essential and inescapable mission of schools, and one that must be done consciously and well;
- that the human community has a reservoir of moral wisdom, much of which exists in great stories, works of art, literature, and philosophy, and that this treasure must be a regular part of schooling;
- that the teacher is central to this enterprise and must be selected, educated and encouraged with this mission in mind;
- and that the most important task facing America's schools today is engaging children in moral wisdom and aiding them in the formation of the enduring habits that comprise good character.

For more information about the center, manifesto or Teachers Academy, contact Kevin Ryan or Karen Bohlin, assistant director of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, at (617) 353-4794.

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June 24, 1996